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C O N F I D E N T I A L BRIDGETOWN 000669

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DEPT FOR WHA/CAR-COLLINS
ICE MIAMI FOR JMAHABIR

E.O. 12958: DECL: 05/22/2017
TAGS: [KCRM](#) [KJUS](#) [KTIA](#) [KCOR](#) [PREL](#) [PGOV](#) [PINR](#) [SNAR](#) [ST](#) [XL](#)
SUBJECT: ST. LUCIA: FREDRICK INVESTIGATION AND MLAT
REQUEST LEAKED

REF: A. BRIDGETOWN 644
[1](#)B. BRIDGETOWN 525
[1](#)C. 06 BRIDGETOWN 469

Classified By: DCM Mary Ellen T. Gilroy for reasons 1.4(b) and (d).

[1](#)1. (C) SUMMARY: During a May 17 television talk show, a prominent news personality leaked the details of a standing evidence request made under the U.S.-St. Lucia Mutual Legal Assistance Treaty (MLAT) concerning Richard Fredrick, St. Lucia's Housing Minister suspected of ties to drug trafficking and money laundering. Fredrick defended himself by charging that the investigation is politically motivated. Comptroller of Customs Terence Leonard, who is heading the investigation, claimed that the public leak will not compromise the integrity of the investigation and remained confident that he would be able to charge Fredrick with customs violations later this year. END SUMMARY.

THE LEAK

[1](#)2. (SBU) On May 17, popular news personality Rick Wayne leaked the details of a standing evidence request under the Mutual Legal Assistance Treaty (MLAT) between the Government of St. Lucia (GOSL) and the United States Government. On his talk show, Wayne read an article from www.offshorealert.com that summarized the evidence request initiated by the GOSL. The request concerns an investigation into Housing Minister and alleged money launderer Richard Fredrick's suspected fraudulent evasion of customs duties related to the importation of motor vehicles.

FREDRICK RESPONDS

[1](#)3. (U) Shortly after Wayne read the article, Fredrick phoned into the talk show to defend himself. Fredrick explained that he has known about this investigation since summer 2006 because the staff of the Florida auto dealership involved alerted him that USG authorities contacted them in conjunction with the investigation. He claimed that former attorney general Philip LaCorbiniere started the investigation as a personal and political vendetta against Fredrick, who beat LaCorbiniere in the March 2006 by-election. (Note: Although he lost the election, LaCorbiniere continued to serve as a Senator and Attorney General until December 2006, when his party lost the general elections. Ref C. End Note.)

LACORBINIERE PLANS TO PUSH BACK

¶4. (C) In a private conversation, LaCorbiniere informed PolOff that he would release a public statement on May 25 countering FredrickQ's public accusations that the evidence request under the MLAT is being pursued for political reasons. LaCorbiniere said he would not address the evidence request concerning Fredrick specifically, but rather he would speak generally on the apolitical nature of MLAT requests. He further commented that, according to his understanding, informing the target of an investigation of that investigation is illegal in both the United States and St. Lucia. LaCorbiniere added that he may challenge Fredrick to explain his statement that staff at the Florida auto dealership notified Fredrick of the investigation.

¶5. (C) LaCorbiniere was also concerned that the USG may have intentionally leaked the evidence request by registering the documents "with an open court," rather than handling them more discreetly. He asserted that the USG did this to keep Fredrick from becoming prime minister during the current political instability. (Note: St. Lucia's government crisis that could have resulted in Fredrick becoming prime minister did not begin until April 30, while the documents were filed with a U.S. district court on April 17. Ref B. End Note.) PolOff countered by noting that Fredrick's St. Lucian political rivals also could have leaked this information, a fact that LaCorbiniere did not dispute.

CUSTOMS NOT WORRIED

¶6. (C) St. Lucian Comptroller of Customs, Terence Leonard, informed PolOff that he has been in continual contact with the U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) attachQ

working on the MLAT evidence request since the on-air leak. Leonard was not worried that the leak would compromise the evidence or investigation. Since the May 17 leak, Leonard also met with current St. Lucian Attorney General, Nicholas Frederick, to brief him on the evidence request, and received assurance that AG Frederick will take all necessary action once St. Lucia receives the U.S. response to the evidence request.

COMMENT

¶7. (C) Sources have informed PolOff that Wayne has received funds from China to shift St. Lucian public opinion in favor of returning diplomatic relations to the Asian power. This leak appears to be one step in that strategy. During St. Lucia's political crisis, Wayne generated negative press against those who rose against Prime Minister Sir John Compton and switched diplomatic recognition to Taiwan. Generally, Wayne has been successful in his strategy and has temporarily neutralized both Foreign Minister Rufus Bousquet and Fredrick (Ref A). However, this particular leak may have backfired. Fredrick's on-air response was smooth, and he may have succeeded in painting himself as a victim of the "wickedness of the previous government."

¶8. (C) More importantly, however, is the status of the investigation. Leonard is confident that public knowledge of the evidence request will not subject his investigators to increased pressure or danger, nor will it compromise his ability to charge Fredrick with customs evasion once the evidence has been obtained. Immunity for parliamentary representatives in St. Lucia is too narrow to impede St. Lucian Customs from pressing charges. As such, Leonard believes the evidence obtained by ICE will be sufficient to bring charges against Fredrick later this year. If convicted, Fredrick could face a fine of ECD 10,000 (USD 4,000) or three times the amount of customs duties he evaded, and/or five years imprisonment. At the very least, being arrested and charged would be an embarrassment that could seriously hamper Fredrick's political career; a conviction could result in forced retirement.

